

CHAIR SECRETARY
23
26/13
HB 505

Mr. Chair, members of the committee, my name is Garnett Rope, here from Vaughns Montana . I would like to draw your attention to the European model of Assisted Suicide and see where they are after scores of years.

* In the Netherlands the assisted suicide (as) rate has increased from 1,923 deaths in 2006 to 3,695 in 2011. This means that 2.8% of all Dutch deaths are caused by (as). They now have mobile units that carry 6 medical personnel in a van right to the patients home. Sort of a "right to your door" death squad.

*In Belgium there is a new trend to give psychiatric patients (as) . A 44 year old woman requested this procedure. Her illness was anorexia . After accusing her psychiatrist of physically abusing her, she then asked a colleague of his to help her die. Conveniently there was no person to testify against the first doctor in a possible abuse case. Currently, people with Alzheimers, dementia, even minors can commit suicide with medical assistance. Couples are permitted to have this procedure when one has a terminal illness and the mate wants to die with them. Interestingly, no doctor has ever been prosecuted in these type cases.

Recently 2 deaf twin brothers, Marc and Eddy Verbessem asked for assisted suicide. They were going blind and were fearful of not being able to see each other. A doctor assisted in helping them die.

Also in Belgium, Neonatologists have drawn up a list which enables the euthanasia of premature newborn infants or those presenting a handicap in one of 3 instances:

- 1) the infant has no chance of survival
- 2)it is deemed to have a mediocre quality of life
- 3)their outlook is poor— the infant will suffer unbearable pain.

The list of possible abuses goes on and on.

Assisted suicide is legal in Belgium, Netherlands, Luxemboug, and Switzerland.

Interestingly it has spawned a form of tourism that locals call "suicide tourism".

An individual plus some family and friends travel to a place where they find an eager Dr. to assist them in their death. Guess it is good for business.

We often see glowing ads on tv presenting Montana as the "last best place" for adventurers, tourists, citizen explorers. Are we now to be known as a place for "suicide tourism"????? In this case, Montana would really be their "last best place"!! I hope and pray that this will not be the case for us here. Let's close the door resoundingly on the "Baxter ruling" and vote YES on HB 505.

I am a doctor in Oregon, where assisted suicide is legal. A few years ago, I was caring for a 76-year-old man who presented to my office a sore on his arm, eventually diagnosed as melanoma. I referred him to specialists for evaluation and therapy.

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I had known this patient and his wife for more than a decade. He was an avid hiker, a popular hobby here in Oregon. As his disease progressed, he was less able to do this activity, becoming depressed, which was documented in his chart.

During this time, my patient expressed a wish for assisted suicide to one of the specialists. Rather than take the time to address his depression, or ask me as his primary care physician to talk with him, she called me and asked me to be the "second opinion" for his suicide. She told me that barbiturate overdoses "work very well" for patients like this, and that she had done this many times before.

I told her that assisted suicide was not appropriate for this patient and that I did not concur. I was very concerned about my patient's mental state, and told her that addressing his underlying issues would be better than simply giving him a lethal prescription. Unfortunately, my concerns were ignored, and two weeks later my depressed patient was dead from an overdose prescribed by this doctor.

Under Oregon's law, I was not able to protect my depressed patient. If assisted suicide becomes legal in Montana, you may not be able to protect your friends or family members.

I urge you to contact your legislators to tell them to keep assisted suicide out of Montana. Don't make Oregon's mistake.

Dr. Charles J. Bentz
Portland, Ore.